

Town Administrator's Report

May 28, 2013

The areas and issues in which we have dedicated substantial time and attention since the last Town Board meeting include:

- Corps Permitting
- Property Tax Legislation
- Griggs Approach Project
- Issues Related to Island Events and Conditional Use Permits
- Docks and Shoreline Issues

Corps Permitting: At long last, the Army Corps of Engineers has issued permits for the completion of Big Bay Town Park and the Industrial Park area. We are pleased to have secured those permits, so the work can move forward, but remain concerned with the extraordinarily extended time frame required to reach that goal --- seventeen (17) months!!

The permit for BBTP was conditioned on the opportunity for a pre-construction walk-through by Bad River and Red Cliff THPOs and the requirement of monitors during construction – the Town has advised both Bands that we will commence construction on or about June 17, and that, if they would like a walk-through to communicate with us prior to that date – additionally, the Town advised the Bands that the names of prospective monitors should be gotten to the Town prior to the 17th so that those individuals could be cleared for admittance to the site.

We will continue to advocate on a case-by-case, site-by-site assessment, a position that has found agreement by the State Historical Preservation Officer (SHPO). In addition, we will continue to advocate on behalf of a far more compressed time-frame for assessment, consultation and determination with respect to permits to avoid a continuing series of delays, distractions and postponements --- understanding that there will be a ‘new normal’ in the permitting process, it nonetheless must far better reflect the exigencies of business and construction seasons.

Property Tax Legislation: The ‘Greg Nelson Memorial Property tax Exemption’ legislation is now ready for introduction in the legislature and is awaiting word from us to actually drop it in the hopper. I met with the Ashland County Board Finance Committee on Friday, May 24th, for the purpose of securing their endorsement of the legislation. It was clear that they have substantial concern about the Island having the unilateral ability to deduct/exempt property tax contributions for services it should, but does not, receive from Ashland County. The Town Administrator was accused of trying to bankrupt Ashland County with this legislation --- so it appears as though we have their attention!! The Finance Committee suggested that ‘we leave Madison out of this’ and asked that the Island compile a list and amount of all the County

services and programs it would like to access and the County Administrator and Town Administrator would then negotiate amounts of support and assistance to ensure those services and programs are available on the Island --- they would like to compose a Memorandum of Understanding to the effect that they are committed to providing the Island with all services and programs available to the rest of the County.

I believe we should move forward with the introduction of the Bill in the legislature. Regardless of the promises or protestations of the County, history has demonstrated that we are continually given short-shrift. My sense is that we can get the Bill passed, even in the face of County opposition, and should pursue that avenue to ensure we have at our disposal the ability to build and enhance those programs and services we believe to be of value to our citizens.

Griggs Approach project: Contracts have been signed, concrete planks have been ordered, and work is scheduled to commence on or about the first or second week of June – the project is expected to take approximately 5-7 days.

We were contacted by both the lawyer for and the Grutzner family itself regarding the project. The Town Administrator spoke, at length, with both parties, dispatched copies of the plans and details of the project – assuring both the attorney and the Grutzners that the dock portion of the project had been deleted. Nonetheless, there was some concern expressed by the Grutzner's that they had not been kept apprised (in the loop) regarding the status and progress of the project. TA has instituted a policy of regular and continual communication with adjoining property owners for all project undertaken in order to forestall future claims or concerns of a lack of communication. The Administrator composed a letter underscoring the infrastructure and public safety importance of the approach and advised the Grutzners of the new communication policy – which was the requested result of the discussions with the parties.

Issues related to Island Events and Conditional Use Permits: Discussions were held between prospective event holders and potential Island venues, in part precipitated by the denial of the MIWP picnic permit. Additional requests have emerged and concerns expressed. We explained, carefully, that absent compliance with the terms and conditions of existing Conditional Use Permits, the Town Board could not, and would not, issue licenses, permits or permission to hold events that would ultimately end in conflict and controversy.

The period of language change to the Zoning Ordinance has provided the opportunity to address the central issues related to CUPs.

Docks and Shoreline Issues: Docks and shoreline issues have emerged as a growing issue and concern. The WI DNR and, to a lesser extent, the Army Corps, have increased their interest in dock type, location and permitability. We are working closely with affected businesses and regional communities to ensure that fair and reasonable standards are established – standards that reflect history, heritage, economic stability, sound scientific and engineering principles. Further, we are working closely with regional opinion leaders and elected officials to ensure that potential

economic and employment dislocation does not result from a precipitous and ill-considered department ruling.

Community Outreach and Communication: The town administration continues its practice of regular communication and discussion with officials, businesses, and citizens to secure their views and ideas and to understand their concerns. The public outreach has resonated with our community, allowing everyone to feel as though their voice is heard --- we will continue to ensure the Town Hall door is always open, the TA is accessible and ready to discuss and listen and that the Town Administration is interested in and responsive to the concerns, ideas, advise and advisement of all citizens.